



RESOURCES

News about nature, history and horticulture in Fairfax County

Volume 3, No. 4 Summer 2003



What's with the Weather?

By Jane Scully, ResOURces Editor

The weather outside was frightful last winter and early spring. Numerous snowfalls and record cold temperatures played havoc with school and work schedules. Rainfalls added to the likelihood of flooded roads and basements. Trees and plants bent low with the weight of all the snow. It was a bleak, black-and-white world.

That was then, this is now. Flooded streams and rivers have receded and we're outdoors again. Finally warmer weather has brought us back into the garden, hiking along streams and putting the memory of cold and ice behind us. But is it that simple?

First, the good news. When we asked "the weatherman," Doug Hill, meteorologist for WUSA television, he reported that, "All in all, I'd say we could look forward to a pretty nice summer. We've had enough moisture since last September to keep things healthy. The aquifers are rising and the ground is saturated."

Judy Okay of the Virginia Department of Forestry agrees. "It should be a good year, with all the moisture. The snow actually served as good insulation for plants. If it had been ice, plants would have tended to break rather than bend."

The pattern of snow melt can have both positive and negative environmental impacts,

► **Weather** *continued on page 10*

Making Every Drop Count — Simple Things Gardeners Can Do

By Deborah Waugh, Green Spring Virginia Cooperative Extension Master Gardener

Who said DROUGHT? This summer, let's hope that gardeners won't have to contend with the parched, hard times we experienced last year. However, even if rainfall is plentiful, this is the time of year to re-evaluate the ways we use water in our gardens.

While gardening is considered a wholesome endeavor that enhances our environment, certain gardening practices can compromise water quality. Overuse threatens water supplies. Surface run-off from gardens can carry fertilizers and pesticides into streams, rivers and lakes. Groundwater is affected when these agents seep below the water table. Erosion by wind or rain carries off topsoil that can clog waterways and reservoirs. While each garden by itself may not contribute much to the problem, added up, many small contributions pose a serious threat.

Yet good gardens thrive with good water-wise practices. The same techniques that improve soil, beautify landscapes, improve plant health and reduce maintenance also help to protect and conserve water — and lower water bills! It's surprisingly easy to cut water consumption by 50 percent or more. Start by thinking about your soil, your site and the ways you deliver water.

Consider your landscaping. Limit run-off and erosion by using porous paving materials such as gravel, crushed stone or wood chips instead of impermeable concrete or asphalt. Use groundcovers on steep slopes and areas of bare soil. Direct roof run-off so that it spreads over well-drained soil rather than the driveway, and place water-guzzling plants in that area.

Know your soil and improve it. Loamy soil uses

► **Every Drop Counts** *continued on page 10*

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Summer Surprises

New at Green Spring Gardens

For early risers, come see the gardens in a new light, with tours from 7 to 8am. Make your \$5 reservations and meet at the Gazebo for guided tours on June 11 or 21, July 9 or 13, and August 6 or 16. For later risers, guided tours from 10 to 11am provide a perfect introduction to one of the area's most dynamic gardens. Dates are Mondays, June 2 and 16, July 7 and 21, and August 4 and 18. Each \$5 programs requires reservations. Have a bloomin' good time!

7th Annual Herndon Bluesfest

Let great music, food and down-home hospitality add a sparkle to your summer! On Saturday, July 19, from 10am to 8pm, Ray Kaminsky, Jack Fretwell, Barrelhouse Bonni, Catfish Hodge, Andra Faye, Sparky & Rhonda Rucker, Robert B. Jones and Guy Davis will entertain at Frying Pan Park's 4-H building. Bring a blanket and buy a picnic supper from our food vendors. The event is co-sponsored by Frying Pan Park, the Council for the Arts of Herndon and area businesses. Donations are welcome.

Saturdays: Family Arts in the Parks



On most Saturdays at 10am in June through August, Arts in the Parks brings the best in family entertainment to Ellanor C. Lawrence Park. Music, puppets, magic, and ballet are just some of the presentations during this summer series. For a schedule, please call 703-324-8566 or get your copy at Walney Visitor Center. The program is sponsored by McDonalds Family Restaurants.

Civil War Encampment



At Sully Historic Site, Federal and Confederate troops will recreate Civil War daily life as re-enactors demonstrate the varied work of the military and how civilians went on with their lives as their husbands, sons and brothers marched off to war. Visit the weekend encampment and discover the living quarters and victuals of these hardy souls. The July 19 and 20 event will be held from 10am to 5 pm. The cost, including a tour of the 1794 house, is \$6 for adults, \$4 for seniors and children.

Colvin Run Mill Summer Fun

Bring out your undiscovered artistic abilities as you carve a handsome creature from a block of wood! Experts from the Northern Virginia Carvers will lend you their tools and their expertise at Colvin Run Mill from noon to 4pm every first and third Sunday this summer. The lesson is free, with a nominal charge for wood blanks. Also on Sundays the miller will be grinding grain, weather permitting, powered by the newly restored water wheel! Cornmeal, grits and whole wheat flour will be for sale in the General Store. Call 703-759-2771 to confirm schedules.



TO OUR READERS

This will be my last issue as editor of *ResOURCES* and *ResOURCES Online*. I have greatly enjoyed creating this venture — with your help — and hope that you too have enjoyed these three volumes of the publication. Your notes and suggestions have meant a lot.

Our parks are one of the finest jewels of our county, ranging as they do from beautiful river sites to historic mills, from wonderful nature centers and programs to quiet stream valley trails. We are fortunate indeed to have them, for ourselves and for our children.

So enjoy this beautiful season. Your parks are waiting!

Jane Scully, Editor

Free Fun on the Farm

- Frying Pan Park will hold its Summer Harvest Day on July 12, from 10am to 4pm. Keep neighborly tradition alive by joining the farmers in shelling and grinding corn. Enjoy farm games and watch the animals getting a cooling bath and hair cut. See a wide variety of antique farm equipment.
- On August 2 and 3, the Fairfax County 4-H will hold its free annual fair from 10am to 4 pm. You'll find old-fashioned country fun with games, rides and exhibits. See the 4-H exhibitors getting their project animals ready for the show.



Historic Properties Rental Services

Fairfax County is full of history and historic places. Some have been preserved as historic sites by the Park Authority. Others have been preserved for their historic vernacular architecture, refurbished to serve again as gathering places for special events and get-togethers. The eight properties in the Historic Properties Rental Services collection are available for private and corporate celebrations, special events and meetings. Call 703-938-8835 for more information or see our properties at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/weddings.htm.



The Fairfax County Park Authority is committed to equal access in all programs and services. Special accommodations will be provided upon request. Please call the ADA/Access Coordinator at 703-324-8563, at least 10 working days in advance of the date services are needed. TTY (703) 803-3354 <http://www.co.fairfax.va.us/parks/ada.htm>

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To receive your free copy of **RESOURCES**, fill out the form on the back cover or register directly on our web site at www.co.fairfax.va.us/parks/resources.htm.

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RAILROAD MANIA: *The Life and Times of the Manassas Gap Railroad*

By Jane Scully, ResOURces Editor

Weaving through Alexandria, Fairfax City and on to Manassas is the abandoned railway bed of the Manassas Gap Railroad chartered 150 years ago. Today these bulwarks of dirt curling west to the Blue Ridge Mountains are silent witnesses to the ambitious dreams, changing economic and political climates and the devastating ruin caused by the Civil War. The Manassas Gap Railroad Historic Site in Annandale is one of the best spots to explore this Virginia Historic Landmark.

The railroad was built in part as a product of the speculative frenzy of railroad building in the late 1840s and early 1850s. The advent of steam-powered engines inspired the construction of railroads to connect the fertile farms of the expanding West to the traditional markets and business hubs along the East Coast. A feverish program of railroad construction created some 3,668 miles of track in less than 20 years.

Economic competition for access to the productive farms of the Shenandoah Valley increased when the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad (B&O) opened a line to Winchester through Harper's Ferry in 1836. The merchants of Alexandria, fearful that they were losing their crucial wagon trade with the Shenandoah Valley, received a charter in 1848 from the state legislature for the Orange and Alexandria Railroad (O&A). The line ran from the rural fields south in Orange to the port city.

Its success bred greater ambition. By 1850 another group of merchants and farmers received incorporation for the Manassas Gap Railroad (MGRR) that would recapture the wheat trade of the upper Shenandoah Valley that the B&O had successfully acquired through its Winchester branch. Rich planters and prominent business owners in the area determined its route and invested heavily in its future.

To reach the valley, the line would run west from the Manassas Junction on the Orange and Alexandria line, through Gainesville, past Front Royal, through the Manassas Gap and on to Strasburg. It was completed in three years and celebrated with rhetorical gusto.



These stone walls are remnants of the earthworks built to carry the rails of the Manassas Gap Railroad's Independent Line, begun during the railroad boom before the Civil War and never completed.

Buoyed by new revenues and awash in plans for expansion, the MGRR company decided to build its own Independent Line directly from Manassas Junction to Alexandria rather than pay the O&A its high rail-rental charges for goods that had to be transferred from the MGRR and shipped to Alexandria on those lines. The legislature approved the plan in March 1853.

The Independent Line was to run 34 miles, crossing the Bull Run west of Chantilly and then Cub Run, into a sweeping curve crossing first the Warrenton Turnpike and then

the Little River Turnpike to what is now the city of Fairfax. It then ran east near the village of Annandale, turning south to recross Little River Turnpike, run through Indian Run Valley and on to just outside Alexandria.

The process of obtaining the necessary land, however, and the costs of the major filling and leveling required for construction reduced profits and assurances of state aid. By 1858 the company's debts were enormous, and growing hostilities and talk of secession hung heavy in the air. One year short of completion, the Independent Line fell victim to the Civil War, and no steel rails were ever laid. Instead, its earthworks served as battle sites and as little-known transportation routes for both Confederate and Union soldiers.

The Manassas Gap Railroad never recovered from the war, during which its rails were torn up and its rolling stock destroyed by both sides. The right-of-way was relinquished and much land was put back into farming. In some places, however, where deep cuts, high fills or substantial masonry work such as at the Manassas Gap Railroad Historic Site in Annandale, the roadbed remains. Its high fill areas, shallow cuts and two historic culverts, all constructed during the 1850s, remain in remarkably complete condition. The Historic Site is a perfect place to look back on the tremendously complex tapestry of how people, places and events — especially surrounding the Civil War — converged to create a place of major historic significance. 🦋

A Partnership of Quality



Liz King and naturalist Michael McCaffrey admire a picture about how things grow drawn by a participant in Hidden Pond's partnership program with Fresh Fields Whole Foods Market of Springfield.

The Naturalist Corner at Whole Foods

Hidden Pond Nature Center and Whole Foods of Springfield will host three educational programs this summer geared for children three to five years old. The three programs will focus on Pollinators, Berries and Fish, respectively. Crafts, stories and more will be part of the programs presented at the Whole Foods Store at Keene Mill Plaza, 8402 Old Keene Mill Road on the following Wednesdays: June 25, July 30 and August 27 from 11 to 11:30 am. Call Whole Foods at 703-644-2500 for the day's topic and to make a free reservation.

Shared values are key to the dynamic partnership between Hidden Pond Nature Center and Fresh Fields Whole Foods Market of Springfield. Both groups believe in providing high-quality products, satisfying customers and caring about the community and the environment. Last year the market was given the Elly Doyle Special Recognition Service Award by the Fairfax County Park Authority to mark the success of the collaboration.

The partnership began with a raffle in support of a project that had both an educational and environmental purpose. Fresh Fields Whole Foods Market suggested that the funds collected during the raffle be used for a public demonstration garden at Hidden Pond Nature Center to show homeowners what they can do to make their backyards more environmentally friendly.

The raffle brought in a total of over \$600, which was given by Fresh Fields for plants and planting material for the garden designed by volunteers at Hidden Pond. When completed, this display garden will contain a plaque highlighting the contribution of the Springfield Fresh Fields Whole Foods Market.

Fresh Fields has a corporate philosophy of giving a minimum 5% of net profits every year to a wide variety of community and non-profit organizations. Last September the Springfield Fresh Fields Whole Foods Market selected Hidden Pond to be the recipient of a percent of the selected day's overall sales. Promoted at both the park and the store, the day was a great success and raised over \$1,300 for the nature center.

In another partnership venture based on shared values, the park and the store created an in-store monthly Naturalist Corner at Fresh Fields for children aged three to five (and their parents). The store provided a comfortable sitting area and the needed materials for this program. Hidden Pond provided a variety of programs.

The first programs began in September 2000 with a presentation by Hidden Pond staff that focused on animal diets and how they compared to human diets. To kick things off, a teen volunteer dressed as a groundhog greeted the store's patrons. It was a wonderful — and unusual — opportunity for all concerned.

This lively interpretive program continues today. In less than two years, more than 440 children and their parents have attended the 22 programs, having fun and exploring the natural world. The store promotes the program with flyers at the store, in their newsletters and through email updates. Hidden Pond also promotes this community program in its site calendar and in *Parktakes*, the Park Authority's quarterly publication listing programs, classes and facilities. 🦋

Lorton/Laurel Hill: *Join the Planning Process!*

The land has been a national NIKE missile site, a Revolutionary War patriot's home, Teddy Roosevelt's progressive agricultural Workhouse and Reformatory and, through the last decade, a prison stretched beyond its resources.

Today, the county has taken ownership of the approximately 2,400-acre property most recently known as Lorton. The size of the property is approximately the same size as the Town of Herndon and over 1½ times the size of the City of Falls Church. In planning the overall site now called Laurel Hill, the county will be involved in one of the most exciting projects it has ever managed. The success of this planning depends greatly on citizen understanding, input and creative thinking.

Some of that input and creative thinking has already been put to work. Legislation designed to transfer the land from the federal government to the county was passed by Congress in 1998. In it was the requirement that the county develop a Reuse Plan for the site that would "maximize use of the land for open space, park land, or recreation" prior to its actually acquiring the land.

Following this direction, a citizens' committee worked through 1999 to develop an overall plan that laid out different areas of the site for a number of general categories of use. Their resulting Comprehensive Plan and its approval by both the county and Congress allowed completion of the transfer in July 2002.

To address the "open space, park land, or recreation" requirement, the Comprehensive Plan set aside 1,600 acres for such purposes, much of it rolling meadows, woodlands and agricultural land used in the prison's farm program. Other major land designations included an Adaptive Reuse area of 150 acres that is the site of historic brick buildings built by inmates using handmade bricks from the prison kiln. These 90-year-old buildings reflect the period's classic revival architecture with its arcades and courtyards.


Other planned areas at Laurel Hill include a high school and a middle school, as well as senior housing and residential redevelopment. While some other designations have been made, much remains to be decided. This year will mark a highly intense planning process with a large number of public hearings and

opportunities for citizen input. Such a project, it is felt, should be one the entire county can take pride in and enjoy the results.

The size and scope of the project requires a master planning process that goes beyond the comprehensive plan and addresses more of the details for the project. The year-long master planning process will include development of adaptive reuse recommendations for the historic buildings areas. In a parallel process, the Fairfax County Park Authority and the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority will work on plans for the park and recreational areas, as well as preserving environmentally sensitive areas. (For the most recent information on the Laurel Hill project as well as some fascinating history, see www.fairfaxcounty.gov/gov/cex/laurelhill.)

The Planning Process has four phases. The Park Authority will hold public hearings to gather ideas for parks and recreational activities on its 1,600 acres; the county will hold separate hearings on the adaptive reuse proposals. For the Park Authority, the first phase is underway, and it continues to hold public hearings and community meetings to gather proposals and ideas. Phase 2 is a review of the proposals and ideas and their integration into alternative concept plans. These plans will be evaluated based on a number of criteria and will include a community meeting. Dates for all public hearings can be found at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/news.htm.

Phase 3 is the actual development of the draft master plan. It will document the preferred plan based on the evaluation in Phase 2 and provide more detail on financial analysis, phasing and design. The draft plan will be presented to the community this summer. The comments received on the draft plan from the community and interested groups will be incorporated into Phase 4's preparation of the final master plan.

The time to join in the planning is NOW. Some of the ideas already expressed include an equestrian center, athletic field complexes and other innovative proposals. A golf course has already been planned and approved. Please attend the public hearings and meetings that are designed to help shape the future of this unique and exciting addition to our county's resources. 

*The success
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Summer on Grandpa's Farm

By Todd Brown, Manager, Frying Pan Park

Lots of folks have stories of spending summer on a farm. A farm — whether it's Grandpa's, Uncle John's or Cousin Alice's — is always a great place to get away and enjoy a different life. But I grew up on a beef and pig farm in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. So where does a farm kid go during the summer? Well, another farm, of course.

I went to my grandparents' dairy farm for a couple of weeks each summer. I really enjoyed the sights, sounds and smells of a different kind of agricultural operation. And I also came to work. I was a big help, and the farm really got kicked into high gear when I was there for those couple of weeks. At least that is what I thought at the time. Now I realize that I worked about a half-hour a day and played with my cousins the majority of the time.

My half-hour was a huge deal for a small kid. I had a couple of jobs that seemed to

take a long time. First, before the cows came into the dairy to get milked, I had to shovel food in a chute that led down to the trough where the cows ate while they were being milked. Wow, meeting the nutritional demands for all those cows was on my small shoulders! The milk quality for thousands of people was based on my preparing dinner for these living milk factories. Little did I know the feed was a balanced ration already prepared, and the cows were on a self-feeding system where they could eat all they wanted.

Then came the critical job of bringing the cows up from the pasture to the barn to be milked. I thought that this was the biggest and most important job on the farm. Obviously the cows could not be milked without me bringing them up. Without milk, the farm couldn't make money, my grandparents would go broke and the farmhands' families wouldn't have money for clothes.

Practically the whole county was relying on me successfully bringing the cows up to be milked. Later in life I learned that milk cows are creatures of habit and can tell time better than our watches. The cows come in the barn twice a day every day at the same time, all by themselves. My grandfather was trying to make me feel important or just get me out of his way. I am sure a little of both.

My last job was to try to help my grandfather milk the cows. Now this is when my grandfather probably wished either I was older or my two weeks were over. I was the kid of a thousand questions and my grandfather was a man of few words. I would take him well beyond his daily quota.

Today I truly appreciate my grandfather's patience and as long as I live I will never forget the beautiful sight of those big black-and-white spotted Holstein cows lying on the green grass as I came over the hilltop to bring them in. 🦋

On Saturday, June 7, from 10am to 4pm, come celebrate National Dairy Month at Frying Pan Park and make some of your own farm memories. Try your hand at milking our cows and goats, learn where milk comes from and how it is made. Test your taste buds at the Cheese-Tasting Contest, climb a hay pyramid, play in a sandbox full of corn. This free event is a great opportunity to learn how farm chores used to get done and how they get done now.



Unique Milestones at Sully's Antique Car Show

By Barb Ziman, Events Coordinator




This June the Antique Car Show celebrates a historic milestone. This is the 30th year of partnership between Fairfax County Park Authority and the Model A Ford Club in producing an entertaining and educational day in the park. In addition, 2003 marks the 75th birthday of the Model A Ford.

Sully Historic Site invites you to enjoy these notable anniversaries at this 30th annual Antique Car Show on Sunday, June 15, from 10 am to 4 pm. Celebrate Father's Day as well at this special event and learn about the evolution of transportation in Fairfax County.

More than 400 antique and classic cars will fill the grounds for this largest car show in Northern Virginia. Trophies will be awarded in all classes, and a special "Best in Show" Award will be given by the Sully staff. As well, you can purchase the car of your dreams at the Car Corral and shop for the perfect gift or accessory in the Auto, Crafts and Antiques Market with more than 100 vendors. Don't miss your chance to own the 2003 limited-edition collectable car show pin sold for \$5 each by the Model A Ford Club.

The members of the George Washington Chapter of the Model A Ford Club spend thousands of hours each year preparing for the Antique Car Show. They have forged a unique friendship with the Park Authority. Through this high-quality show the group raises funds for the club, generates revenue for the Park Authority, and brings attention to the preservation of cultural and natural resources in Fairfax County. These outstanding contributions to the Park Authority were recognized in 2001 when the club was given its Elly Doyle Park Service Award.

When you need to recharge during the day, treat Dad and yourself to a delicious lunch or snack from one of several food vendors on the grounds. Get your toes tapping to the music of Jumpin' Jupiter, the popular 50's rock 'n' roll band, and the Fairfax Symphony Dixieland Band.

Tickets to the show are \$7 for adults, \$6 for seniors and \$5 for children. Guided tours of the first floor of the 1794 historic house are included in the price of admission. For more information, please call Sully at 703-437-1794 or visit our website at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks. 

EVERYBODY EATS!

By Ann Korzeniewski, Assistant Site Administrator, Colvin Run Mill Historic Site

What do two brothers on their family farm in Australia, a small boy in Nepal and an American farmer in Florida have in common? The answer: *grain*. These people all appear in the new permanent exhibit, "Grains Around the World," that has just been installed in the barn at Colvin Run Mill Historic Site in Great Falls. Their images represent the diverse people around the world who grow different kinds of grain.

What connection do these people have with Colvin Run Mill? Again, the answer is: *grain*. For 30 years, visitors to the mill have learned how the 19th century miller bought grain from local farmers and ground it into wheat flour and cornmeal. In the 21st century, Fairfax County residents and visitors hail from many places around the world and have fond memories of delicious foods baked with their local grains.


The purpose of the new exhibit is to connect our local history and foodways with the experiences people bring with them from the wider world. "Community" is one of the main themes we discuss at Colvin Run Mill, and the new exhibit expands that



theme to show the community of people around the world who grow, grind and eat grain.

Can you name the six major grains grown in the world?¹ You will be able to after a look at the Grains Around the World exhibit. The eye-catching design includes a giant world map depicting the wide, wide world of growing grains. It shows where each of the grains is grown and tells the history and a few fun facts about each of them. The colorful format is easy for visitors of all ages to understand.

Speaking of community — the spirit of community is alive and well in Great Falls. This new exhibit was made possible by a generous donation from Mike Kearney, proprietor of the Old Brogue, an Irish pub in Great Falls. The Brogue Charities' money was matched by the Fairfax County Park Authority's Mastenbrook Volunteer Matching Funds program. The Friends of Colvin Run Mill provided additional funding.

Visit your "community" at Colvin Run Mill, 10017 Colvin Run Road off of Route 7 in Great Falls. Call for information and hours at 703-759-2771. 

¹Wheat, corn, rice, barley, oats and rye.

MOUNT AIR— *Artifacts Rebuild an Era*

By Janet Sutton, Laboratory Archaeologist, Cultural Resources Protection

We live in a county rich in historic resources. European colonists left documents of the times in which they lived. Yet these records, usually of the more-prosperous inhabitants, do not tell us about many aspects of their lives. Other people have left no written records at all.

Archaeology can supply some of that missing information. A recent excavation or “dig” at Mount Air plantation, a Cultural Resource Park overlooking Accotink Creek in southeastern Fairfax County, is beginning to reveal volumes of information about how people lived in the years leading up to and following the Revolutionary War.

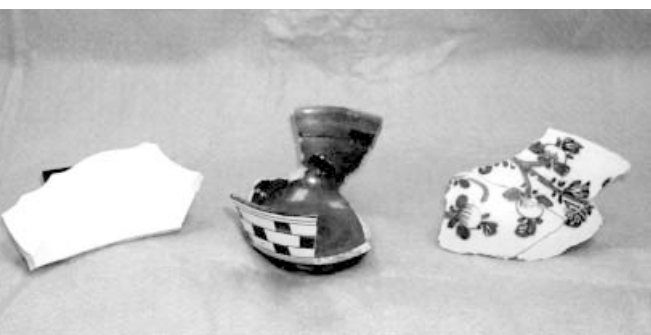


FIGURE 1: Colonoware bowl, Agateware cup and Delft bowl.

The historic record tells us that Mount Air was built by Dennis McCarty around 1730 and that he and his descendants lived there until the land was sold in 1860. The family was part of the plantation aristocracy, and Dennis’ wife Sarah was George Washington’s cousin.

The artifacts we’ve found in the foundation of what may have been an ice pit support this picture of genteel living. The ceramics include costly dishes imported from England, China and Germany, as well as earthenware containers made by local potters who may have been slaves or Native Americans (Figure 1).

The number of broken glass bottles indicates that wine was a favorite beverage; other shattered remains indicate it was sipped from fine goblets. Utensils were of pewter or silver plate with wood, bone or ivory handles (Figure 2). Pieces of bone and shell tell us that cows and pigs provided most of the meat that was consumed and that oysters were a favorite.



FIGURE 2: A wine bottle neck and base, fragments of stemmed goblets, knives and pewter spoon.

The elegant coats and waistcoats worn by the men and the ladies’ beautiful dresses have disappeared, leaving nothing behind but their buttons. However, with them we find evidence of the other story that Mount Air has to tell. Leisure and gaiety were only part of life there; the other part was the hard work performed daily by the family and their servants and slaves. The clothing worn by master and slave alike was made on the plantation, and we have found artifacts

comprising the “tool kit” that would have been used in this task: thimbles, scissors and numerous straight pins made of brass (Figure 3).

Cooking would have been the job of slaves or servants, and cooking methods would have varied. Generally, the members of the McCarty family and their guests would have eaten roasted meat and vegetables. However, scorch marks on the outsides of earthenware pots and pieces of a large cast-iron cauldron suggest that soups and stews were eaten as well. Since such dishes used poorer cuts of meat and stretched ingredients to feed a larger number of people, the artifacts probably speak to the diet of the less-privileged members of the plantation population.

As yet there is no indication as to how all these artifacts ended up in the hole left by the ice pit. Evidence of burning in the form of melted bottle glass as well as charred bones and ceramics may indicate that the deposition was the result of a fire, possibly resulting from a lightning strike in 1859. Further analysis needs to be done with these artifacts to answer this and other questions. What we have found to date, however, gives us a more-complete picture of life in early Virginia. 🦋



FIGURE 3: Brass pins, silver thimbles, scissors, coat and vest buttons.

BACKYARD BUTTERFLY BONANZA!

By Lee Ann Kinzer and Maria Parisi, Habitat Stewards

Monarch Viceroy, Mourning Cloak, Painted Lady, Dreamy Dusky Wing — surely no other creatures are so fancifully named, nor as beloved, as butterflies. Some 700 butterfly species are found in North America (about the same as the number of bird species). With careful planning of home gardens and public spaces, we can observe them close up and help assure them the environments they require. If the idea tempts you to want your own butterfly garden, begin with the hints that follow, then consult the suggested web sites for details and you'll be ready to dig!

Research — Begin by researching the butterflies that live in or migrate through your area. Selecting plants for butterflies that are not local to your home may result in a beautiful garden, but not a butterfly habitat.

Pesticides — The purpose of pesticides and herbicides is to control unwanted insects and plants. They may affect butterflies and caterpillars exactly as they affect the harmful insects at which they are aimed. Minimizing use of these products is important for a butterfly garden.

Plant selection — Butterflies are sensitive environmental indicators. Their recent decline in numbers is attributable to habitat loss and alteration. Careful selection and use of plants in gardens, especially in urban areas, can mitigate some of the loss.

When choosing plants, consider the butterfly's four distinct life stages: egg, larva (caterpillar), pupa (chrysalis) and winged adult. Many caterpillars are highly selective in their food choices, and adult females are adept at finding the right ("host") plants on which to lay their eggs and for the caterpillars to feast upon. Some butterflies overwinter in our area

and others migrate, so food is needed from early spring through late fall.

Habitat gardeners tend to prefer native plants for butterfly gardens, partly because these have evolved in concert with butterflies to provide their "natural" food and partly because they are often more easily established and maintained. Most butterflies are attracted to a wide range of "nectar plants" in their search for food. They do, in fact, have flower color and type preferences. In general butterfly preference for color is first purple and pink, then yellow, finally white. Flat, daisy-like flowers usually offer a better resting place for nectaring.

Garden planning — Plant in masses. Butterflies can more easily spot large areas of color. Plan for a variety of plant heights, from low to tree height. Don't rush to tidy up your garden—you may remove pupae or hibernating adults that are hidden among the dead leaves and twigs.

Sun and shelter — Flowering plants require sun, and so do butterflies. They can fly well only when their bodies have been warmed to temperatures of 85 to 100 degrees F. Flat stones and plants with horizontal, outreaching branches or flowers provide needed basking spots. Eggs and caterpillars may develop up to 50 percent faster in warm sites, actually increasing the number of butterflies. Shelter from cooling wind is also important.

Additional elements — Mud puddles or wet sandy areas may attract groups of butterflies (mostly males) to drink or to engage in "puddling." Some butterflies are attracted to carrion, animal scat or urine, or rotting fruit. Any of these could be hidden at the margins of planted areas; fruit, however, may attract raccoons.

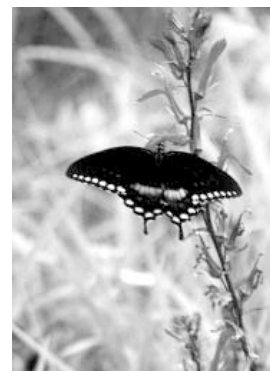
Be patient — It may take more than one season for butterflies to find you.

For more-detailed information on butterfly-attracting plants, visit Green Spring Gardens Park (<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/gsgp/gardening.htm>) to access "Using Native Plants to Attract Butterflies and Clearwing Moths in the Washington, D.C. Area and Virginia" for additional tips and details about recommended plants. Also check the Washington Area Butterfly Club's website (<http://users.sitestar.net/butterfly/index.htm>) for more resources, including dates and places of native plant sales, events such as butterfly gardening classes and a list of local public butterfly gardens.

This article is the second in a series on inviting wildlife to your backyard. Futures issues of ResOURces will have articles on attracting birds and hummingbirds, as well as creating rain gardens. 🦋



This swallowtail finds purple butterfly bush nectar appealing.



Black swallowtails enjoy brilliant-red cardinal flower.



A Monarch butterfly feeds on its favorite, milkweed.

SEASONAL STORIES

► **Weather** *continued from page 1*

explains Asad Rouhi, Urban Conservation Engineer for the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District. The slow melting that generally occurred here allows moisture to infiltrate into the soil, recharging groundwater. Fast melting caused by rises in temperature and added rainfall can result in sudden increases in runoff volume. These peak runoffs can cause erosion within the streambeds, and unstable stream banks may become saturated and collapse, creating further stream erosion.

There has been a downside to the winter weather as well, however. The high amounts of pooling water should make it a banner year for mosquitoes. Experts expect higher-than-ever incidences of West Nile virus. Homeowners need to eliminate standing water near or around their residences more vigilantly than ever.

Another major concern has been the amount of salt, chemicals and sand that were used this winter on roadways and other impermeable areas to clear them of snow and ice. These materials have been washed by melting snow and rain into nearby streams and waterways, changing their chemistry.

Salt is very hard on plants, says Adria

Bordas, the Virginia Cooperative Extension Agent serving Fairfax County. "Salt binds with nutrients in the soil and clogs plant roots so they cannot take up those nutrients. That makes it particularly important to do soil tests to find out about the extent of salt in your growing medium."

Testing is considered especially important this year, even in areas you do not usually amend. Soil test kits are available at any county library for \$7 per kit (For information, see www.ext.vt.edu.)

You may find that your favorite fishing hole has fewer of its usual challenges. Increases in salt in streams could have interfered with the stream insects they feed on, notes Joanna Arciszewski, Watershed Specialist with the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District. Measurements of numbers of fresh-water insects last winter were "some of the lowest numbers the monitors have ever found." If there are fewer insects to feed on, fish will go elsewhere, and decreased fish populations in local streams would impact the birds that feed on them.

The long-term weather report lies ahead. The real test for maintaining groundwater levels, notes Okay, will be the rainfall from May



This snow-fisherman was still in place at Huntley Meadows in late March!

to August. "Last July through September was very dry." However, "unless we have a long, hot drought, we ought to have a pretty typical summer."

Doug Hill agrees. But, he says, "In Fairfax County you won't have that urban heat island effect because you still have kept forested, green areas where there is air movement, mixing of the air. That's critical in keeping areas cooled."

So if you're feeling warm, just come on out to one of Fairfax County's many parks. Our parks are *always* cool. 🦋

► **Every Drop Counts** *continued from page 1*

water most efficiently. A soil test will identify necessary soil amendments. Don't throw away garden waste; use it instead to enrich your soil. Compost

leaves, grass and herbaceous clippings to create a rich organic soil amendment. Be sure to place compost piles away from bodies of water and where run-off is unlikely. Mulch away, remembering that two inches is plenty! Mulches slow down evaporation, cool the soil, reduce weed growth (and competition for water) and boost fertility.

Divide your garden into microclimates — a damp, shady spot here; a hot, sunbaked strip there. Group together plants that have similar water needs: lavenders, perovskia and salvias in sunny, dry spots; astilbes, hostas and lobelias in moist sites. Water the thirsty plants as they need it, rather than the whole garden, to save water and time. Experiment with drought-tolerant plants. Native species that are adapted to local climate and soils often require minimal water, fertilizer and pesticides. Consider reducing the amount of lawn area in your garden. Turf generally needs more water than a landscape of trees, shrubs and groundcovers.

Use a slow-release fertilizer and stick to the recommended amount (keep in mind that low-water-use plants need less). Before reaching for the pesticide, try non-toxic and

biological pest control methods first. For example, prune out infested parts or hand-pick insects from plants. Lure in their natural enemies by planting nectar and pollen flowers. If you do use pesticides, spot treat the affected areas and try products that pose the least threat to water quality, such as horticultural oils and insecticidal soaps.

Avoid watering when it's windy and the sun is at its hottest. Water slowly and deeply and only when plants need it. Keep an eye on factors such as soil, plant types, density of plantings, and rainfall to gauge how much water your plants really need. Get in the habit of checking the weather forecast before you water. If a storm or high winds are coming, hold off. Pick your battles. If water is scarce, protect your most vulnerable trees and shrubs. Young plants need more water than older ones, so don't hold out on them.

The principles of water-wise gardening are simply good gardening practices. Every little bit helps — and every drop of our most precious resource counts. 🦋

For more advice on this topic and to request a soil test kit, contact the Fairfax County Master Gardener Horticulture Helpline for Virginia Cooperative Extension at 703-324-8556.



Fluffy-flowered astilbes



Different varieties of hostas

Keeping Turfgrass “Green”

By Jane Scully, ResOURces Editor

Taking care of 295 athletic fields requires a lot of seed, good soil, and a willingness to watch cleats run all over them.

The Park Authority's mission of promoting stewardship of our natural resources reaches all aspects of our operations. Of particular interest has been our golf course and athletic field turf management. Keeping the athletic fields safe and playable is a major responsibility of the Park Operations Division. How can this be managed without using—or overusing—pesticides and fertilizers that may be washed into nearby streams and waterways, affecting plant and animal life? Are these missions contradictory?

Bob Studholme, the Fairfax County Park Authority's Turfgrass Specialist, believes that athletic fields and golf courses are not villains at all. In fact, fertilizers are not the largest part of his turfgrass management program. The issue, he says, goes much deeper than that—down to the soil, the medium in which the turfgrass grows.

“Lots of managers manage for the grass when you should be managing for the soil. If you can do that, keep the soil chemically balanced, biologically active and well drained, your need for fertilizer and pesticides will be much lower.”

Since Studholme is responsible for the care and feeding of 295 athletic fields covering 280 acres in the county, his methods have a direct effect on soil—and stream—health. Before taking this position, he spent 17 years managing the Park Authority's golf courses. When Studholme implemented his soil-based turf management program at the Burke Lake Park golf course, annual fertilizer requirements dropped by two-thirds. And with healthier soil and turf, water and fungicide use was reduced by 50 percent.

But there are any number of factors to study before fertilizer is even considered. Studholme takes soil samples from each of his 295 athletic fields every two years to determine their chemical deficiencies and sufficiencies. Such laboratory analysis is critical in achieving chemical balance of the many elements. Most soils in our area are low in calcium and potassium, while being too high in magnesium.

Equally important, Studholme tells us, is to make sure the soil is properly aerated. This is done for each field twice a year.

“If there's no air, there's no biology. Soil microbes, like bacteria and other organisms, need oxygen to proliferate. They are the key to breaking down materials you add to the soil to make them available as food for the plant.”


Only after the soil in each area is tested, balanced and aerated is fertilizing done. Studholme uses natural organic fertilizers as much as he can, feeding the soil at least twice a year with fully composted poultry litter blended with kelp, dry humates, molasses and rock minerals. These nutrients feed the plants as well as help balance the chemistry, depending on amounts, type and source. The soil microbes use the carbon sources for energy.

Ironically there are two major factors in the Fairfax County area that work against getting air into the soil. The area's prevailing soil type is an easily compactable sand-silt clay mix. The soil is too high in magnesium and too low in calcium and potassium, making for “tight” soils that do not breathe well and are rock-hard when dry, goopy when wet.

As well, our climate doesn't help much. Studholme notes that we live in the Transition Zone between where cool-season grasses are stressed throughout our typical summers and the warm grasses go dormant, or may not even survive, our winters.

The other main challenge to maintaining turf grass is the very purpose of the fields—use for athletics. The cleats of soccer, baseball, softball, football and lacrosse players run on the fields most hours of every day, inevitably compacting the soil and driving air out of the soil.

Despite the challenges, Studholme aims to keep all the county fields safe and playable, with healthy turf on top. And in fact, the fields are in much better shape than they were several years ago. The management program builds in the vagaries of weather and season. “Every year is different,” says Studholme. “You can't just go by the calendar.”

Studholme should know. He practices at home what he does in his turf management program. And with “minimum effort,” he's got the best lawn for blocks around. 

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YOUR PARKS

Visit a park for summer fun.

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7315 Ox Road, Fairfax Station
Call 703-323-6600

Colvin Run Mill
10017 Colvin Run Road
Great Falls
Call 703-759-2771

Ellanor C. Lawrence Park
5040 Walney Road, Chantilly
Call 703-631-0013

Frying Pan Park
2709 West Ox Road, Herndon
Call 703-437-9101

Green Spring Gardens Park
4603 Green Spring Rd., Alexandria
Call 703-642-5173

Hidden Oaks Nature Center
7701 Royce Street, Annandale
Call 703-941-1065

Historic Properties Rental Services 703-938-8835

Hidden Pond Nature Center
8511 Greeley Blvd., Springfield
Call 703-451-9588

Huntley Meadows Park
3701 Lockheed Blvd., Alexandria
Call 703-768-2525

Lake Accotink Park
7500 Accotink Park Rd., Springfield
Call 703-569-3464

Lake Fairfax Park
1400 Lake Fairfax Drive, Reston
Call 703-471-5414

Riverbend Park
8700 Potomac Hills Street
Great Falls
Call 703-759-9018

Sully Historic Site
Sully Road, Chantilly
Call 703-437-1794

Need directions? More information?

Visit us online at: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks

Peak Shorebird Trip

Riverbend Park will host a van trip for adults on Friday, August 8, from 8:30am to 8pm. We will visit the Delaware Bay area to visit prime shorebird migration sites, including Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge. Birds could include curlew sandpiper, Wilson's phalarope, long and short-billed dowitchers, possibly ruff, and many others. Bring insect repellent, sunscreen, bag lunch and plenty of water. Reservations are required by August 1; the cost is \$20. Call 703-759-9018.

Summer Specials

Summer Garden Concerts!

Celebrate the soft summer evenings in beautiful gardens with music from several of the Fairfax Symphony's musical groups lilting around you. The free summer concerts at Green Spring Gardens Park will be held from 7 to 8pm on Wednesdays, June 18 and July 16. Bring a picnic dinner, relax and enjoy a night in the gardens.

Family Programs at Hidden Pond

All summer long, the creative interpreters at Hidden Pond Nature Center will host Friday-night programs called After Dark in the Park for all ages, usually from 7:30 to 8:30pm. Subjects include Fireflies, Native American Tales of Tails, Super Snakes Alive and Animal Survival Tactics. Prepaid reservations are \$3 or \$4. Call Hidden Pond at 703-451-9588 for more details.

Garden Gate Plant Shop

Have you seen a plant at Green Spring that you just have to have, but can't find at local nurseries? The Garden Gate Plant Shop features plants grown at Green Spring that are especially well-suited to our climate and growing conditions in Fairfax County. The plant shop, located behind the Horticulture Center, is open Monday through Saturday 9:30am to 4pm. and Sunday from 12:30 to 4pm.



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